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NSC FOR RUSSIA DIRECTORATE

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SUBJECT: RUSSIA SECURITY COUNCIL OFFICIAL ON IRAN,  
AFGHANISTAN, NORTH CAUCASUS

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Susan M. Elliott for reason  
s 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

1. (C) Deputy Russian Security Council Secretary Vladimir Nazarov told NSC Russia Director Solomon November 5 the Russian leadership is committed to concluding the START follow-on negotiations before the treaty expires in December. On Iran, Nazarov believes the U.S. and Russia have a "common language" now, accenting "patience and persistence" as the watchwords for negotiations on the nuclear issue. He said the S300 deal had been stopped and is unlikely to be unfrozen soon, given Iran's untrustworthy behavior. Russia, Nazarov said, views terrorism and narco-trafficking as the main challenges in Afghanistan, urging U.S. cooperation with the CSTO on counter-narcotics efforts and suggesting Russia could do more on economic projects. Solomon also asked Nazarov for help in stopping Russian officials from making spurious accusations about U.S. special services ostensibly destabilizing the North Caucasus and mis-characterizing American development assistance in the North Caucasus as support for terrorism.

2. (C) The willingness of a Security Council official to conduct such an in-depth discussion with us represents a shift in attitude for an institution dominated by the "siloviki" -- officials drawn largely from the security services which have been indifferent or even hostile to better relations with the U.S. The recent visit of NSA Jones clearly played a role and we are also seeing indications that on at least two key issues -- arms control and Afghanistan -- President Medvedev has made it known that it is in Russia's interest to work with the U.S. and he is pushing his bureaucracy accordingly. End summary and comment.

START AND IRAN

3. (C) Queried about the START talks, Nazarov said the proposals delivered by General Jones were useful, but he did not want to discuss details lest he cross wires with the negotiating teams in Geneva. On the political level, he said, President Medvedev is pushing to have the deal completed on time before the treaty expires in December, but he also noted that concluding a quality deal is more important than meeting a deadline.

4. (S) Regarding Iran, Nazarov said the U.S. and Russia have now found a common language to deal with the challenges posed by the Islamic Republic. Nazarov said the both countries now recognize the seriousness of the threat of Iran possessing

nuclear weapons, adding that geographical factors make the threat greater for Russia than for the U.S. Secondly, he said there is agreement that a resolution to the issue must be pursued through political/diplomatic means. Nazarov expressed appreciation for President Obama's willingness to pursue diplomacy, but acknowledged that negotiations could not proceed indefinitely. He noted that Russia was in full agreement on the need to press Iran to accept the IAEA Tehran Research Reactor deal, insisting that Iran agree to and implement all aspects of the deal to export LEU. In this regard, he noted that Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov would be in Iran November 9 to do what he could to move the process forward. Looking ahead, he called for Russia and the U.S. to conduct a joint analysis of the threats posed by Iran's ballistic missile program.

15. (C) On the 5 1 negotiations, Nazarov characterized Iran as a "difficult" partner which requires "patience and persistence." In an apparent reference to turmoil within Iran, Nazarov added there are also "internal" sources of for Iran's difficult posture in negotiations. He praised El Baradei's approach and agreed that unity among the negotiating partners is essential. Solomon noted that patience is important, but it has limits as the President has stated. Nazarov accepted this, but noted that once patience expires we should not have a "doomsday" scenario, but intensified political pressure.

16. (S) Nazarov confirmed that a decision was taken by the Government of Russia to "stop" the delivery of the S-300 system to Iran and the GOR is not fulfilling the contract,

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but "how long it remains stopped depends on the situation in Iran." He suggested that this decision to stop delivery was punitive, in response for lack of Iranian cooperation with the international community on its nuclear program. Nazarov commented that the facility at Qom and the Iranian attitude towards IAEA inspectors had caused Russia to reevaluate the Iranian program. However, should Iran resume cooperation, accept the NPT Additional Protocol, and meet its commitments with the IAEA, then the issue of the transfer of the S300s would be re-examined. (Comment: this implies the bar for the Iranians is set very high for the S-300 deal to be completed; other GOR interlocutors are less emphatic.) Nazarov acknowledged Israeli concern about the deal, but stressed the transaction is fully in accord with international law and does not contravene any agreed-upon sanctions. Nazarov argued that the original purpose of the deal was to help enhance Iran's sense of security.

17. (C) Nazarov acknowledged the potential symbolic significance pundits in the U.S. may attach to the S300s for U.S.-Russian relations. He added that Russia consults regularly on this topic with the Israelis and exchanges analyses of the threat with the GOI. But, he concluded, the worst outcome would be if a "third party" (Israel) acted unilaterally and created unpleasant facts on the ground.

AFGHANISTAN  
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18. (C) Nazarov was upbeat about prospects for greater cooperation on Afghanistan, but joked that "one learns from one's own mistakes, not from the mistakes of others." For Russia, the key battles in Afghanistan are against narcotics trafficking and terrorism and he said NSA General Jones's use of the term "narco-terrorist" during his Moscow meeting was on target. He noted that his boss, Patrushev, is well-versed in counter-terrorism operations and believes a military-only approach will fail, adding that Patrushev's views probably resemble those of Vice President Biden. On concrete projects, Nazarov suggested Russia could contribute to the improvement of the Salang Tunnel as well as other projects.

19. (C) Nazarov called for NATO and the U.S. to cooperate

with the CSTO on counter-narcotics activities in Afghanistan, noting that the U.S. has thus far declined to engage with the CSTO for political reasons. He called for a full-court offensive on the entire supply chain of drugs including precursors, labs and traffickers. Narco-businessmen must be convinced they will pay for their activities. Solomon responded that the U.S. position on institutions such as the CSTO is evolving as evidenced by American participation at a recent SCO meeting devoted to Afghanistan. If the CSTO has a concrete proposal for CN cooperation in Afghanistan, the U.S. will consider it seriously, he said. Solomon noted that the DEA was a regular observer in the annual CSTO counternarcotics operation "Channel." He also pointed to successful CN collaboration within the framework of the UN Paris Pact, International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), and Central Asia Regional Information Coordination Center (CARICC).

#### NORTH CAUCASUS

¶10. (S) Solomon raised the fact that some government leaders in North Caucasus, such as President of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov, regularly accuse United States special services of fomenting instability and supporting terrorism in the region.

These accusations are groundless and should not continue. The U.S. is open about our activities in the region, including support for NGOs in the region, and would be pleased to provide detailed information to Nazarov, the MFA, or FSB at any time. Nazarov complained about U.S. NGOs that ostensibly foster separatist and extremist sentiments in the region and noted that for leaders in the region foreign interference is a sore subject. Nazarov claimed there are documented connections between terrorists in the North Caucasus and groups in Afghanistan and Iraq. Moreover, he claimed Russia has evidence that one of the participants in the 2004 Beslan school massacre met with individuals in London (Nazarov appeared to be pointing to a connection with British special services, but could have also been alluding to Chechen leader in exile Zakayev). Because of this,

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Nazarov said, the Russian government did not believe the UK government is serious about counter-terrorism cooperation. Beyrle